

6934

2

AN
EXAMEN
OF
MR. SHERIDAN'S PLAN.





AN
E X A M E N
OF
MR. SHERIDAN's PLAN
FOR THE
IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATION
IN THIS COUNTRY.

BY A SET OF GENTLEMEN
ASSOCIATED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

LONDON:
PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1784.

EXPLANATION

OF

SHERIDAN'S PLAN

FOR THE

IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATION

IN THIS COUNTRY.



BY A SET OF CIRCULARS

ASSOCIATED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

LONDON:

PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1794.

A N
E X A M E N
O F
MR. SHERIDAN'S PLAN,
&c. &c.

HAVING attended Mr. Sheridan's last Course of Prelections, &c. we were so struck with the importance of the subject, that we formed ourselves into a small society, to meet twice a-week, in order to examine his proposed Plan for the Improvement of Education. With this view we began with his first Essay on that subject, entitled, British Education; wherein he undertakes to shew, that most of the evils under which this country labours, are the natural and necessary consequences of the present system of education. After a minute and candid disquisition, we were clearly of opinion that he had fully proved his point.

We then had recourse to his Plan of Reformation, published some years ago; and after
B a close

a close investigation of its contents, though we were far from thinking it perfect in all its parts, yet we judged the great outline to be admirably adapted to that of the British Constitution. But however right this may appear in theory, it cannot easily be reduced to practice. To overturn a long established mode of Education, and substitute a new one in its place, can be effected only by the power of the Legislature.

Why that body have never made any enquiry into an article of such importance; why they have suffered a Course of Education established in times of ignorance, in times of popery and arbitrary power, to remain unaltered to this day; a Course wholly calculated for the monastic life; which does not qualify a man for any one office, station, or profession in the world; a Course neither suited to the nature, end, or principle of our constitution; why, in short, the legislative body have never examined the chief source, from which all the good, or evil, all the happiness, or misery of a nation, must necessarily flow,—can be accounted for only by the blindness of prejudice, and tyrannic power of custom.

However, till some enlightened patriot shall open the eyes of the Senate, and place full in their view, all the fatal consequences of their unpardonable negligence in an article of such vast importance, no general or effectual change can take place. It is devoutly to be wished, that
some

some noble mind, qualified for the task, may undertake it; and surely great will be his reward, both in present honour, and future fame.

All hopes of amendment in the present system, except in the way above mentioned, being thus given up, or at least suspended; we next took into consideration such parts of his Plan, as we judged to be practicable, by private assistance and encouragement. In this light, there were two articles which appeared to us of the highest consideration; and these were, 1st, The regular study of our own language; 2dly, The revival of the art of elocution. As these interfered not with the present system, nor required any innovation there, but might be considered only as an addition to, and a great improvement on, the former plan, we thought the introduction of these new studies would not have many obstacles to encounter, and that an establishment for them might be made without much difficulty; especially when the great benefit arising from such an establishment to the Public at large, and to so many private individuals, should come to be considered.

But as it is very difficult to get mankind to turn their thoughts towards any Plan not yet reduced to practice; as they are apt, through prejudice, to oppose, or through indolence, to neglect, all innovations; we thought it necessary to lay before the Public, the fruit of our deli-

berations on these two very momentous articles.

And first, with regard to the regular study of the English Language.

On this subject, we ought, at first setting out, to take shame to ourselves, when we reflect that we are the only civilized nation in Europe, perhaps in the known world, who have never taken any pains about our language, but have left it to take its course wholly under the guidance of chance. The Greeks were incessantly employed in the regulation and refinement of their speech; at Athens, it was the first study of the boy, and the last quitted by the man. In consequence of which, they carried it to such a degree of perfection, as far to excel all others, before or since. The Romans studied the Greek, but it was with a view to enrich their own, and render it as conformable as possible to that beautiful model. The Italians, French, and Spaniards have, for more than a century, been engaged in the same pursuit; and have reduced their several tongues into such order and regularity, that, with the assistance of their excellent grammars, dictionaries, and critical treatises on all the peculiar delicacies of each, foreigners may arrive at as perfect a use of them, by the aid of proper masters, both in speaking and writing, as the natives themselves. While English is looked upon as a language utterly unattainable by the inhabitants of other countries; and this is supposed

posed to arise from some inherent difficulties in the tongue itself; whereas it is wholly owing to our neglect of methodizing it, and pointing out its idiomatic difference from others. It would appear, even upon a slight examination, that no language in the world, not the Hebrew itself, has been constructed on so few, and such simple principles; insomuch that a perfect knowledge of all the fundamental rules of our grammar, may easily be obtained in a week; to attain which, would cost the application of many months in any of the modern languages. On this account, when Richlieu first projected his plan for regulating and ascertaining the French tongue, had our Ministers followed his example, the English might probably at this day have been the current language of Europe; not only as being more easily attainable, but as being, beyond all comparison, superiour in every quality which can constitute the excellence of a language. Besides, the great advantage which England has always had over that country in point of commerce, might have enabled her to have spread her tongue more easily through all quarters of the globe. The name of Voltaire would not then have obtained greater celebrity, nor his works have been better known throughout the world, than those of all our English authors put together. Nor would he have had an opportunity of exhibiting our Shakespeare in such false colours, or representing the national taste as gross and barbarous to the last degree,

degree, on account of our admiration of his works.

Thus the English are known to the rest of the world, only as merchants or warriors. All the nobler powers of the mind, in which the true dignity of human nature consists; all the fruits of genius in the works of their admirable authors, are confined to themselves, and kept from the view of the surrounding nations, by the impenetrable bulwark of their language. In this respect, conformably to their situation, they may be said to be still—

Et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos—

and to maintain their old character of

Hospitibus feros—

For when a stranger arrives in this country, as his first wish must naturally be, to be able to converse with the natives; so his first enquiry of course is, after a Master to teach him the language. What must his astonishment be, when he is told, in a civilized country, that there are none such to be found, and that he must pick up the language as well as he can? Is not this such an answer as he might expect, were he landed among the Hottentots?

It must be allowed, that the glory of a people, with respect to other nations, chiefly arises from the
the

the works of their authors; and the extent of their celebrity is bounded only by the extent of their propagation through the different regions of the world, in their original writings. It is owing to their admirable authors that the fame of Greece and Rome remains undiminished to this day, and is spread over the whole face of the globe. It is owing to the same cause that the French language is almost universally studied. But any arguments tending only to the glory of this country, by endeavouring to excite an emulation with our neighbours in this respect, would, in these selfish sordid times, be of little avail. Let us therefore examine what internal benefits would arise to the natives themselves, by introducing the regular study of their own language.

In the first place, nothing could so far contribute to the promoting of true knowledge, and to prevent the propagation of error, as the execution of such a Plan. Mr. Locke has clearly proved, in the third book of his Essay, that almost all the disputes in conversation, and controversies in writing, which are carried on without end, take their rise from an abuse of words; wherein the several parties, not having the same distinct and precise ideas annexed to the terms they make use of, can never come to an agreement: and this he considers as the chief source of all our errors in our pursuits after knowledge.

The causes of this uncertainty in the use of words, he has laid open in Chap. 10. Book III. "Men having been accustomed from their cradles to learn words, which are easily got and retained, before they knew or had formed the complex ideas to which they were annexed, or which were to be found in the things they were thought to stand for, they usually continue to do so all their lives; and, without taking the pains necessary to settle in their minds determined ideas, they use their words for such unsteady and confused notions as they have, contenting themselves with the same words other people use; as if their very sound necessarily carried with it constantly the same meaning. This, though men make a shift with in the ordinary occurrences of life, where they find it necessary to be understood, and therefore they make signs till they are so; yet this insignificancy in their words, when they come to reason concerning either their tenets or interest, manifestly fills their discourse with abundance of empty unintelligible noise and jargon; especially in moral matters, where the words, for the most part, standing for arbitrary and numerous collections of ideas, not regularly and permanently united in nature, their bare sounds are often only thought on, or at least very obscure and uncertain notions annexed to them. Men take the words they find in use among their neighbours; and that they may not seem ignorant what they stand for,

for, use them confidently, without much troubling their heads about a certain fixed meaning; whereby, beside the ease of it, they obtain this advantage, that as in such discourses they seldom are in the right, so they are as seldom to be convinced that they are in the wrong; it being all one to go about to draw those men out of their mistakes, who have no settled notions, as to dispossess a vagrant of his habitation who has no settled abode."

Whoever reads this third book of Mr. Locke with attention, will be convinced of the absolute necessity there is for studying the precise meaning of all abstract terms with the utmost care, in order to illuminate the understanding, and attain real knowledge. It is obvious that the most effectual method of doing this, would be to have children instructed by proper Masters, at the same time that they learn to read, in the meaning of what they read; and not to let a single term pass by, without explaining to them the precise ideas belonging to it.

We have been the longer on this head, as there is scarce any one at all conscious of the necessity there is for such a study. There is hardly an individual who does not think that he of course acquires a knowledge of his mother tongue, and who is not confident that he perfectly understands the meaning of the words he makes use of, as is set forth by Locke in the above quotation.

tion. Nor need we wonder that this opinion should so generally prevail, when even that acute philosopher had long remained in the same error; which he ingenuously owns in the following words, Book III. Chap. 9. Sect. 21. "I must confess then, that when I first began this Discourse of the Understanding, and a good while after, I had not the least thought, that any consideration of words was at all necessary to it. But when, having passed over the original and composition of our ideas, I began to examine the extent and certainty of our knowledge, I found it had so near a connection with words, that unless their force and manner of signification were first well observed, there could be very little said clearly and pertinently concerning knowledge."

Thus we find that the sagacious Author of this noble Essay, was so far blinded by the general prejudice, as to have made a considerable progress in the work before he thought any consideration of words was at all necessary to the elucidation of his subject: and yet he found it impossible to proceed with any prospect of success, till he had written an entire book upon the use and abuse of words, which he had before looked upon to be utterly unnecessary. This great discovery, however, has hitherto been productive of little benefit to mankind, for want of some method to carry it into effect.

Nothing

Nothing can more clearly evince the necessity there is for such an institution, than the number of inaccuracies, solecisms, and even grammatical errors, to be found scattered through the works of some of our most celebrated authors; whereof Dr. Lowth in his Grammatical Institutes, and Dr. Blair in his Lectures, have furnished us with many examples. But an argument, still more cogent, may be drawn from the ambiguity of our laws, through the want of precision in wording them; insomuch that there are few Acts of Parliament made, which are not afterwards obliged to be revised and amended on that account.

While the powers of the understanding are thus rightly directed, and the judgment rendered sound, those of the fancy also will be properly regulated, and a true taste established. We may then come to prefer the elegant simplicity of the ancients, to the false glare of points and witticisms, by which this nation has so long been misled. But it is impossible we should see the beauties of the Greek and Roman authors, while the present method of teaching those languages continues. It is through the medium of our own words that we view their ideas; and nothing can contribute more to degrade, and place them in a false light, than the method of literal translation, or, as Milton phrases it, *lamentable construction*, practised in our schools. The poor boys, utterly unacquainted with the elegance of diction in their own language, and having no

words but such as are in common use, are necessarily confined to those in construing their lessons; by which the very meaning is for the most part perverted, and the spirit of the original entirely lost. But, were they first taught the rudiments of grammar, as common sense directs they should be, in their own tongue; were they made to read and understand such of our authors as are best adapted to their slender capacities, before they entered upon Latin; and ever after were the study of the two languages to go hand in hand, and lessons given alternately in authors of similar genius, and books written on similar subjects, they would then be no longer confined to verbal translation, but would be able to render the meaning of the original, in apposite and correspondent phraseology. Having been taught the rudiments of grammar in their own tongue, they would find their labour lessened, and the path smoothed for them, in entering upon that of another. They would have a pleasure in comparing the constitutional and specific differences between the two, and thus obtain a clearer and more distinct knowledge of each. The many good consequences that would result from this, may fairly be estimated from what happened in a case exactly parallel. It was not till some time after the birth of Cicero, that the Romans applied themselves to the regular study of their own language. The Greek was the only one then taught, in the same manner as Latin and Greek are here, but not so generally: and their own,

as with us, left wholly to chance. In consequence of which it was poor and barbarous; and there were scarce any books written in it worthy to be handed down to posterity. The first who introduced the study of their own, was a native of Gaul; who, by intense application, having made himself master of their language, and formed a method of teaching it, opened a school for that purpose at Rome. But such was the blindness of prejudice, that several of the more ancient Senators set their faces against the innovation, and particularly the then Censor ordered the school to be shut up, and the Preceptor to be silenced. However, not long after, common sense prevailed, the school was again opened, and flocked to by all the young nobility of Rome. This seminary became the parent of many others, and in a short time there was no citizen of rank or fortune, who did not make that their chief object in the Education of their children. And what was the consequence? The progress made in its improvement was astonishingly rapid. By the nicer investigations of the more refined spirits, and the joint labours of the whole community, its errors were corrected, its anomalies reduced to rule, its rudeness polished, and its deficiencies amply supplied from the Grecian stores; insomuch that, in less than twenty years after the establishment of the first school, the Latin arrived at that degree of perfection, which is to be seen in some of Cicero's earliest productions. And in less than threescore years from
from

from that period, were brought forth all the great works of the Roman classics. If we only adopt the method practised by them, there can be no doubt that it will be attended with equal success: nay, we have some advantages over them, that will probably ensure it to us even in a shorter space. These have been forcibly set forth by Mr. Sheridan in the following passage of his Treatise on British Education.

“ That we might, in all probability, bring our language to a state of perfection, in a much shorter space of time, and with less labour and difficulty than the Romans did theirs, may be judged by a comparative view of the state of theirs, at the period when they first entered upon that task, with ours as it stands at present. At that juncture, the Roman language was far from having arrived at a state of maturity; it was weak and poor, and was gradually strengthened and enriched by what it borrowed from the Grecian stores. Whereas ours has long since arrived at its full size, and is copious even to exuberance. They were obliged to wait the slow growth of the tree; but ours has long since borne fruit, and is likely to become barren, only through the luxuriance of the branches, and thickness of the foliage. It is apparent enough how much less time it requires to prune away what is superfluous, than to wait the gradual increase of what is useful.”

Much

Much more might be advanced upon this subject, but it is hoped there has been enough said, to shew the necessity there is for making the study of our own language a fundamental part of the education of our youth. We will now proceed to the next article, that of reviving the long lost art of Elocution. By which is meant, the art of teaching the just and graceful management of the voice, countenance, and gesture in Public Speaking. This art first took its rise in Greece, which, of all countries in the world, seems to have been, constitutionally, the best formed to bring the whole of human language to perfection. Soon after the inhabitants were civilized, that region was divided into several small states, each of which had liberty for its object. Freemen were not to be governed by force, like the vassals of despotism, but by persuasion. The power of persuasion, depending chiefly upon the power of speech, language of course became the principal object of attention to all who were ambitious of obtaining such power. And as, in order to persuade, it was necessary both to please, and move the multitude; that language which in itself contained the powers of pleasing and moving, was, of course, the most sought after and cultivated. It is evident that this could be no other than the language of nature, expressed by the living voice in words accompanied by tones, looks, and gestures, which virtually contained those powers.

powers. As pre-eminence in Public Speaking was the surest road to power, fortune, and fame, it is to be supposed that men of the brightest parts and most splendid talents in that way, laboured incessantly from generation to generation, to improve upon their predecessors, till oratory reached its utmost degree of perfection; at which time it was reduced to an art; into the mysteries and practice of which, all the youth of quality were initiated, and regularly trained by professed rhetoricians; and to the perfection of which all the other parts of education seemed to tend as to their centre. In this state of its maturity was it at once transplanted to Rome, where it flourished eminently in that congenial soil of freedom, while the republic subsisted; but decayed together with the decline of liberty, and with the loss of that, totally perished; nor has it since been revived in any part of the globe. Of all the nations at present subsisting in the world, Great Britain seems the best calculated, from the nature of its constitution, to restore it to its pristine rank; and yet, of all the civilized countries of Europe, it has been the most backward in making any attempts towards it. This has been owing to a fatal error in our system of Education, which has turned the attention of all its inhabitants wholly to the written language, to the utter neglect of that which is spoken.

When

When it is considered, that we have the same opportunities of displaying the powers of elocution, both in the senate house and at the bar, that the ancients had; and have the same motives, those of acquiring power, fame, and fortune, by excelling in that way, to incite us to it: when we reflect what a wide field for oratory is opened to us, utterly unknown to Greece or Rome, which pervades the whole British dominions, by the institution of preaching; and that the number of the priesthood, who cannot properly discharge any part of their office without the cultivated powers of speech, is greater than the whole number of the citizens of Athens, at any given period: when it is considered farther, that all the police and business of the nation, in the several boards, bodies corporate, grand juries, petty juries, down to parish vestries, are discussed and settled by speech alone; it is wonderful to reflect, that, in a nation so circumstanced, there never should have been any attempt made towards improving those faculties, on which the good order, and proper support of their several institutions so much depend. Especially when it is well known, that, on all these occasions, the ignorant, the impudent, and the loud, too often carry it against truth and justice; while modest sense and wisdom are silent, through the want of having been practised in speaking before numerous assemblies.

In order to shew the reasonableness of first applying to the cultivation of the living speech, let us take a comparative view of the two species of language in use, speaking, and writing: nor can we do it in clearer terms, than what we find ready to our hands, in the Essay on British Education. "Let it be remembered, that the instrument used to cultivate all the nobler faculties of man, is language. Now there are two sorts of language in use; the one, spoken; the other, written: the one, manifested by the living voice; the other, by the dead letter. Speech, is the immediate gift of God; who has annexed to it, when brought to perfection by man, powers almost miraculous, and an energy nearly divine. He has given to it, tones, to charm the ear, and penetrate the heart; he has joined to it, action and looks, to move the inmost soul. By that, attention is kept up without pain, and conviction carried to the mind with delight. Persuasion is ever its attendant; and the passions own it for a master. Great as is the force of its powers, so unbounded is their extent. All mankind are capable of its impressions; the ignorant, as well as the wise; the illiterate, as well as the learned.

Writing, is the invention of man; a mere work of art, and therefore can contain no natural power. Its use is, to give stability to sound, and permanence to thought; to pre-

serve

serve words, that otherwise might perish as they are spoken, and to arrest ideas that else might vanish as they arise in the mind : To assist the memory in treasuring these up ; and to convey knowledge at distance through the eye, where it could find no entrance by the ear. The vast superiority of the former over the latter is obvious enough from this view. There is not any power belonging to the latter, which the former, whenever its influence can be exerted, does not possess in a more eminent degree ; whereas there are many powers belonging to the former, in which the latter has no share. The one, presenting to the delighted senses, the most lively images, not only of the ideas arising in the mind, but of all the emotions of the heart, and elegant exertions of fancy, excited by those ideas : the other, coldly offering to the eye nothing but types of the ideas belonging to the understanding, in the dead letter. The one is, at best, but a shadow of the other, whereof it gives as imperfect images, as little landscapes in black and white do, of an extended, and beautifully variegated country ; of which they represent but a small portion, and that deprived of the lively colouring of nature. It is time for us to quit the pursuit of the shadow, in order to lay hold of the substance. Common sense will tell us, that every improvement in the latter, will, of course, be communicated to the former. When it is considered that there is no way so

certain to make men good writers, as first to make them good speakers; that the same habit which gives fluency to the tongue, will also give freedom to the pen; and the same culture which forms the ear to harmonious and expressive cadences in delivery, must also communicate those qualities to the style of the writer, provided the two arts are carried on together: on the other hand, when we reflect that the utmost skill in written language, will never in the least improve the faculties of speech, but rather impede than bring them forward, as bookish men are in general remarkable for the worst delivery; it must be allowed, that we have persisted in a course directly opposite to the dictates of nature, reason, and common sense."

In the former part, it has been shewn at large, that in consequence of our neglecting to investigate the precise meaning of words, much confusion of ideas has been introduced into the understanding, much false knowledge spread abroad, and error instead of truth propagated through the land, by means of the press. We shall here shew, that nothing could so effectually put a stop to the growth of this evil, as the revival of the art of Elocution. There is not any thing which would more compel us to weigh the force of words, to understand the meaning, and enter into the true spirit of authors, than correct reading aloud,

aloud. In silent reading, one may be content with taking in somewhat of the general meaning, and rest satisfied with very confused ideas. They who should be trained in the true art of reading aloud with propriety and elegance, would find their understanding constantly brought to a test. They would soon perceive, they could not deliver intelligibly to their auditors, what they did not perfectly comprehend themselves; nor give life and grace to the spirit of an author, which they did not feel. To the perfection of reading, they would find these points absolutely necessary; and thus, the present vile mode of merely uttering words, in unnatural tones, abuse of emphasis, wrong stops, and false cadences, would, in time, be supplanted by a just and natural delivery; to the great improvement of Elocution, and consequently, of the understanding, the heart, and the fancy.

Were this art once introduced, it would become the most generally sought after of any other, as being the one in which all mankind are most interested, either by affording, or receiving, the highest gratification whereof our nature is capable. Its progress would be rapid, from the very delight attending every advance which the students should make in that most noble and pleasing of all exercises; and which would not suffer them to quit the pursuit, till they had attained the utmost degree of perfection,

perfection, which their natural talents would enable them to reach. To the pleasure attendant on the practice of this art, Cicero has given a strong testimony, where he says, *Dicendi autem me non tam fructus, & gloria, quam studium ipsum, exercitatioque delectat.* Not all the fruit and glory derived from Elocution give me such delight, as the study and exercise of the art itself."

If the youth now take so much pains to excel in the bodily exercises, such as fencing, dancing, &c. if they contend with such ardour for the palm, in racing, hunting, shooting, &c. wherein the strength and agility of the corporeal part only are concerned; to what higher exertions must not their emulation rouse them, when contending for pre-eminence in an art, wherein all the nobler powers of the mind, and all the gracefulness and majesty of the human form, are at once to be displayed before the eyes of admiring spectators. There is no situation in the world in which human nature is exhibited in so exalted a point of view, as it has been thus represented in one of Mr. Sheridan's discourses.

"Imagine to yourselves a Demosthenes addressing the most illustrious assembly in the world, upon a point whereon the fate of the most illustrious of nations depended. How awful such a meeting! How vast the subject! Is man possessed of talents adequate to the great occasion?"

occasion? Adequate! Yes—superiour. By the power of his eloquence, the augustness of the assembly is lost in the dignity of the orator; and the importance of the subject for a while suspended, by the admiration of his talents. With what strength of argument, with what powers of the fancy, with what emotions of the heart, does he assault and subjugate the whole man; and at once captivate his reason, his imagination, and his passions! To effect this, must be the utmost effort of the most improved state of human nature. Not a faculty that he possesses, is here unemployed; not a faculty that he possesses, but is here exerted to its highest pitch. All his internal powers are at work; all his external, testify their energies. Within, the memory, the fancy, the judgment, the passions, are all busy; without, every muscle, every nerve is exerted; not a feature, not a limb, but speaks. The organs of the body, attuned to the exertions of the mind, through the kindred organs of the hearers, instantaneously, and, as it were with an electrical spirit, vibrate those energies from soul to soul. Notwithstanding the diversity of minds in such a multitude, by the lightning of eloquence, they are melted into one mass; the whole assembly, actuated in one and the same way, become as it were but one man, and have but one voice. The universal cry is,—Let us march against Philip, let us fight for our liberties, let us conquer or die.

Here

Here only it is, that the admirable mechanism of the human frame, so far as it regards a union with an intellectual mind, and so far as it is fitted to display all the hidden powers of that mind to view, can be manifested. In these exertions, the divine part of us becomes, as it were, an object of the senses; it is to be seen, to be heard; it lightened, in the eye of a Pericles; it thundered, from his voice. If any one doubt of the truth of what I have here advanced, let him reflect, whether there is any other situation of life, any other art or profession, in which it is possible for man to display all the force of all his faculties, both of body and mind. If there be not, the point must be granted. Compare Xerxes, on his throne; Philip, in the battle of Chæronea; Archimedes, in his closet; or Virgil, in his study; with Demosthenes, rousing the Greeks to the preservation of their liberties—How do the King, the General, the Philosopher, and the Poet, sink below the Orator!"

Having now, beyond all possibility of doubt, laid open the many advantages which would arise to the community at large, from the introduction of this art, and shewn that it would prove the most useful, of all others, to numbers of individuals; the next point to be considered is its practicability.

So strong has been the prejudice of those who have applied themselves only to the study of the
written

written language, that they think it impossible that Elocution should be taught as an art by any regular system; and this we have known to have been gravely maintained by many sages of both Universities, though conversant with the Greek and Roman authors; in some of the most celebrated of whom, particularly Cicero and Quintilian, they may find it set down, that it was the most favourite art in both those countries, constantly taught by Rhetoricians, whose profession was held in the highest estimation, and whose rewards far exceeded those bestowed on all the other masters put together. But this matter is now put beyond all possibility of doubt. In his several works upon that subject, Mr. Sheridan has laid open the whole mystery of the art, from the first simple elements of speech, to their most extended combinations; and has pointed out a method of teaching it, upon as sure grounds, and with equal certainty of success, as any other art is now taught. In order to which, he has laid his foundation, as is done in all other arts, in the first simple elements. Of the number, nature, and properties of which, he has shewn, that we have, hitherto, not only been totally ignorant, but have entertained the most erroneous notions; insomuch that even their number has not before been ascertained. He has proved that we have twenty-eight simple sounds in our tongue, to mark which we have, in reality, but twenty written characters, though more letters appear in the alphabet. He has shewn, that the clumsy contrivances,

trivances, at first in unenlightened times, to make a defective alphabet answer the end of representing words, have ever since so confounded our ideas with regard to the powers of several letters, and their different uses, that all the systems hitherto produced upon that subject, have been a perfect chaos. Nothing can be a stronger proof of the gross errors into which literary men fell, in their several grammars and treatises upon that part of our language which relates to sound, than that the best of them have mistaken diphthongs for simple sounds, and simple sounds for diphthongs; compound consonants for single, and single for compound. Nay, what is still more extraordinary, that they have even mistaken vowels for consonants; all which he has unquestionably proved. What superstructure built on such fundamental errors could stand? The cause of all this confusion he has thus explained, "That they who undertook this task, were men skilled in letters, but not in sounds; and they were blind enough to imagine that the knowledge of the one, necessarily included that of the other. Whereas the very reverse is true; as it would be found impossible to treat justly of sounds, until the man of letters shall have first divested himself of all the prejudices and errors which he had imbibed with regard to that article, from the time of his first learning the alphabet; for there lies the source of their mistakes. They took the alphabet as they found it, and thought it perfect; whereas, this
alphabet,

alphabet, on the revival of the learned languages, was borrowed from the Roman; though it by no means squared with our tongue."

Having ascertained their number, he next proceeds to their usual division, into vowels and consonants. Of the vowels he has produced nine simple sounds, though hitherto reckoned but five, according to the number of their marks. These he has arranged, not by chance, as was formerly done, but by a just gradation, like a musical scale, marking the regular process of the instrument in forming them, from its greatest to its smallest aperture; proceeding from its fullest to its most slender sounds; and thus laying open their nature and properties, according to their quantity, or quality; that is, their length or shortness; their amplitude, or exility.

He then divides the consonants, not into the modern distinction of mutes and liquids, a mere nominal difference, without explaining wherein this difference consists; but into the ancient classes of mutes and semivowels. The mutes, he subdivides into pure, and impure; and the semivowels, into vocal and aspirate; referring them all to the several seats of their formation, whether the lips, the teeth, the palate, or the nose; thence denominated, dental, labial, palatine, or nasal. He shews in what manner all these sounds are to be formed, by the several organs of speech, so as to produce a distinct and

clear articulation, upon which a just pronunciation of words must be founded: and without which a perfect elocution can never be attained. Quintilian, the last great master of the Roman eloquence, does not scruple to affirm, "That in forming the future orator, unless the foundation be laid in the first simple elements of speech, whatever superstructure may be raised on it, will fall to the ground." And in another place, he has this remarkable passage to the same effect. "Not that there is any great difficulty in dividing the letters into vowels and consonants; and subdividing the latter into mutes and semivowels; but because whoever will enter into the inmost recesses of this, I may call it, sacred temple, will find many things not only proper to sharpen the ingenuity of children, but able to exercise the most profound erudition, and deepest science." Accordingly we find that this was a favourite study among the ancients, and men of the greatest abilities, and dignity in the state, applied themselves to it with ardour. Messala, among the Romans, obtained great fame, by writing an express treatise on a single letter: and the honours of Greece were decreed at the Olympic games to Apollodorus, for having made some new discoveries in that way. Julius Cæsar himself, in the midst of his wars, found leisure to write his treatise *de analogia*, which got him immortal fame. Such were the sentiments of the great ancients upon this important article; and they stopped not at the

the theory, but reduced it to practice. The consequence of which was, that all the powers of elocution, and all the elegancies of composition, both in poetry and prose, were carried to a degree of perfection, unknown in any other age or country of the world. In the progress of the work, Mr. Sheridan has shewn, that without knowing the nature and properties of the simple elements of speech, it will be impossible afterwards to discern their peculiar beauty and force when united in words, and the expression and harmony arising from the combination of those words in sentences, or their arrangement in verse. In short, all true critical skill, in whatever regards the sound of language, must have its foundation there.

Having done with simple sounds, he next proceeds to diphthongs; in treating of which he has made surprising discoveries. Here he has shewn that all our grammarians have mistaken simple sounds for diphthongs, and diphthongs for simple sounds; so that, according to their principles, it would appear that we have, in reality, but two genuine diphthongs in our whole language; whereas he has proved that we have at least twenty-three; a richness in which perhaps the English exceeds all other tongues. In doing this he points out the manner of their formation, shewing of what simple vowels they are compounded, and the different proportion of sound belonging to each, by which their respective value is ascertained. Thence through syl-
lables

lables he proceeds to words ; and shews that, by the assistance of his rhetorical grammar and dictionary, their true pronunciation may be acquired, in whatever part of the globe English may be taught according to his method. In the grammar, he has laid open the general principles upon which our pronunciation is formed ; and the rules by which it is regulated, with their exceptions. In the dictionary, he has pointed out the true pronunciation of each word by visible marks ; and thus has he established a permanent standard to the eye, which, like the notes of music, may spread the sounds with equal certainty to any distance. This is a work original in its kind, never performed before in any age or country.

From words he proceeds to sentences ; in treating of which he lays open the whole art of delivery, under the following heads ; accent, emphasis, pauses or stops, tones, pitch and management of the voice. In the second part of his *Art of Reading*, where he treats of poetic numbers, he has opened a mine in our language, which only wants working, to furnish materials for richer ornaments than are to be found in any other now existing. Here he has displayed, in the clearest light, the true state of our prosody, which before was involved in utter darkness ; all writers on that subject, having fallen into the grossest errors, by adopting rules from the Latin or French, not at all suited to the peculiar constitution of our tongue ; in consequence of
which

which our poets have confined themselves to a few simple modulations, where they might have an endless variety. He has shewn that we have fortunately preserved in our tongue, all the sources of harmony, variety, and expression, which gave such beauty and force to the numbers of the ancients; while we have ignorantly followed the French in fettering our metre with that poor Gothic ornament, rhyme, and thus circumscribing it in narrow bounds. He has proved that in our language we possess an instrument, which, though perhaps inferior to the Greek and Roman in point of melody, yet has the advantage of them in the other two articles of variety and expression; and is, in all respects, far superior to all the modern languages. But it is in vain that the instrument is of so great a compass, if we know not how to play upon it. As all the beauty and power of numbers, depend upon a just and graceful recitation, they can never be manifested, or perceived, where the organs of speech are vitiated, and the ear corrupted. Upon the whole he has made it appear, that, in our language, we are possessed of a rough diamond, of the first magnitude, and which only wants polishing, to shew itself of the first water too.

Having thus cleared the way for the introduction of the art of Elocution, by shewing its practicability; in order to induce us to it, it may not be improper here to enumerate the many advantages which would thence result to the Public.

lic. This has been so well done in the preface to the Dictionary, that we shall make no apology for transcribing a passage from it at large.

“ Low as the state of the written language is, that of the spoken is infinitely worse : with regard to which, nothing has been done, even to render a right pronunciation of the words attainable. And with respect to every other point, we are so far from having any way opened for teaching a just and graceful delivery, that even from our learning the first elements of speech, we are so wholly perverted by false rules, and afterwards corrupted by bad habits, that there is scarce a possibility of arriving at any degree of perfection in the most useful and pleasing art that can adorn and dignify human nature. In all places of Public Speaking, in the church, the senate-house, and the bar, the wretched state of Elocution is apparent to persons of any discernment or taste ; more particularly in the church, where that talent is of the utmost moment to the support of religion. But, in general, the Speakers console themselves with the thought, that they are not worse than their neighbours : and numbers, hopeless of arriving at any degree of excellence in that way, endeavour, as is usual on such occasions, to depreciate what they cannot attain. Nay, it has been gravely maintained by many writers, and others, that oratory is not suited to the genius of the nation, or nature of the constitution ; and that any use of it

in the pulpit, the senate-house, or court of law, would even be improper. To this term of oratory, from the erroneous ideas entertained of that art, they annex strange confused notions, of something artificial in tones, looks, and gestures, that have no foundation in nature, and are the mere inventions of man. But if the true art of oratory be only to exhibit nature dressed to advantage; if its object be, to enable the Speaker to display the ideas and feelings of his mind in the most perspicuous, pleasing, and forcible manner, so as to enlighten the understanding, charm the senses, and leave the deepest impressions on the minds of their hearers—Can any one but the most vain pedant, or stupid barbarian, say, that such an art is improper for this, or any other society in the world? To reason with blind prejudice, or invincible ignorance, would be fruitless; but I would beg leave to ask all who maintain this doctrine a few questions.

Whether it would not contribute much to promote the cause of religion, if the service of the church were always performed with propriety, and sermons delivered with due force?

Whether it would not be of service to the state, if all our senators, who had from nature the abilities, should also be furnished, from art and practice, with the habitual power of delivering their sentiments readily, in a correct, perspicuous, and forcible manner? and whether

this would not be equally useful to the gentlemen of the bar?

Whether it would not contribute much to the ease and pleasure of society at large, and improvement of politeness, if all gentlemen in public meetings, or private company, should be able to express their thoughts clearly, and with an utterance so regulated, as not to give pain to the understanding, or offence to the ears of their auditors?

Whether it would not greatly contribute to put an end to the odious distinction kept up between the subjects of the same king, if a way were opened, by which the attainment of the English tongue in its purity, both in point of phraseology and pronunciation, might be rendered easy to all inhabitants of his Majesty's dominions, whether of South or North Britain; of Ireland, or the other British dependencies?

Whether it would not redound much to the honour of this nation, if the attainment of our tongue were rendered easy to foreigners, so as to enable them to read our excellent authors in the original, and converse with the natives of these countries upon equal terms?

Whether many important advantages would not accrue both to the present age, and to posterity, if the English language were ascertained, and reduced to a fixed and permanent standard?

Whether

Whether the first step necessary to the accomplishment of all these points, be not that of opening a method, whereby all children of these realms, whether male or female, may be instructed, from the first rudiments, in a grammatical knowledge of the English Tongue, and the Art of Reading and Speaking it with propriety and grace, in the same regular way as other languages, and other arts, of infinitely less consequence to them, are now taught?"

Hitherto the advantages arising from this institution have been considered chiefly with regard to men; but Mr. Sheridan has shewn that the ladies are equally concerned in it. In a Discourse addressed to them, he has the following passages:

"The motives to induce Gentlemen to promote a Plan for cultivating the Living Language, and the Powers of Elocution, have been already sufficiently urged. But there is another part of the human species, and surely the most amiable, to whose improvement it would be found equally conducive—I mean the fair sex. I know not by what strange fatality it has happened, that in the important article of Education, they have scarcely been considered. The lordly masters of the creation have chalked out a course of instruction for themselves; but the poor women are left to make the best use of their talents that they

can, without assistance. And yet, that they are born with minds capable of as high improvement, as those of the other sex, has been amply proved in the instances of several ladies, who have distinguished themselves as eminently in their sphere, when they have had equal advantages of culture. Is it wise, is it politic in men, to make no provision for the improvement of the minds of those, who are to be their nearest and dearest associates in life? With what justice can they afterwards complain, when they meet not the delights of a rational society with those, whose minds have never been stored with knowledge? Or how can they blame them for passing their time in trifling amusements, when they have not been prepared to fill it up in any other way? It is time some remedy were applied to this evil; and I am much deceived if what I am about to propose, will not open a new Path of Education to the ladies, which will terminate in the completion of all that is to be wished for by them in that point.

To put this in a clear light, let us only consider what the natural consequences would be of introducing the true Art of Reading. Of all arts it would be found the most bewitching, when people should have made any progress in it upon sure grounds. In that case it would prove the most pleasing exercise when alone, and make every one enter into the spirit of an author with ten times the relish; and in com-

pany it would be considered as one of the foremost accomplishments, and which would contribute most to the entertainment of the hearers. How delightfully would the composition of our poets sound from their sweet voices, when properly tuned! And how irresistible must they themselves prove, if they approached nearer to the perfection of their nature, as described by Milton in his Eve, where he says:

“ ——— such prompt eloquence;
 “ Flow’d from her lips, in prose, or numerous verse;
 “ More tuneable than needed lute or harp
 “ To add more sweetness ——— ”

More tuneable, indeed, than lute or harp would such Elocution be, and furnish an accomplishment far more pleasing than any of the splendid trifles now in fashion.

Beside the ornamental part, let us now consider the more important consequences that would follow from this, in point of utility.

Upon making some progress in the Art of Reading, it would be found impossible to arrive at any degree of perfection in it, without a complete knowledge of the Language, both in its grammatical and rhetorical parts. But as they are dry and laborious studies, they are not likely to be voluntarily pursued, without something to sweeten the toil. This, I have shewn,

shewn, would not be wanting to those who should have made any progress in the Art of Reading. The lights which the two studies would throw on each other, would make the task easy; and the delight proposed by accomplishing the end, would make them even fond of the means. Where labour is loved, it ceases to be labour. Let therefore that one point be established; let there once be a method set on foot of teaching young ladies to read well, upon principles of grammar and rhetoric, they will apply themselves to study the best authors with ardour, because with delight. In the English Language alone there will be found a sufficient number, in every species of writing, to store their minds with all kinds of knowledge, which can be either useful or ornamental; and they will have been prepared beforehand to display that knowledge, whenever there is occasion for it, in the best and clearest light. In this case, ladies would have a manifest superiority over the other sex, while the present mode of Education is continued. They would have no occasion to grudge the men their extraordinary labour in pursuit of knowledge, through the round-about steep and perplexed paths of Latin and Greek; when they might arrive at the same end, in a quarter of the time, through the short, easy and pleasant road of their mother-tongue. They would have no cause to envy them their acquisitions in two dead languages,

guages, which they are never after to have an opportunity of displaying, either by speech or writing; while they shall be Mistresses of the living Speech, which alone is employed on all occasions, whether of use or ornament, either by the tongue or the pen. Let the men boast that they can write Latin correctly; let them smile, and be content with writing English in its purity. Let those value themselves on their critical skill in the works of Homer, Sophocles, Virgil, and Horace, in the original: let these be satisfied with reading them in translations, nor think they lose much by the difference; but let them plume themselves on their superiority, if they should have a clearer perception, and a nicer relish of the beauties of Milton, Shakespeare, Pope, and Swift. Let men pride themselves upon their knowledge in Logic, Metaphysics, Mathematics, and other speculative sciences; let the elegant arts, and all that can contribute to the happiness of social life, or the delight of social converse, be the study and employment of the fair. These will be the natural consequences of making the Art of Reading, and the regular Study of English, the two fundamental articles in female Education. But the good will not stop here; it will prove, in its consequences, equally beneficial to the men. For should they, from the inveterate force of custom, persevere in their old track, soon after these studies shall have been pursued with success by the ladies, they

they must be adopted by the men also, and made part of their Course. A young man of twenty, after having finished his studies, would be ashamed to be outdone by a girl of sixteen, in propriety and grace of Elocution, and in a critical knowledge of our mother tongue. This will excite an emulation, which will tend to the improvement of both parties. A relish for the same art, and pursuit of the same studies, would necessarily produce, in the two sexes, such a desire of communicating their thoughts, and displaying their talents to each other, as to introduce that golden state of social converse, which is never to be hoped for, but where the society is composed of both sexes. The men would no longer be devoted to the bottle, or gaming; nor would the ladies find such superlative delight in a rout or a drum. The superiour pleasure arising from such amiable intercourse, would put an end here, as it has done in France, to all separate societies of the sexes. It is well known that the ladies in France, by being regularly taught their native language, are well qualified to judge of literary performances, and often take the lead when such are the subjects of conversation. Infomuch, that some of their most celebrated writers have submitted their works to their criticism before publication, and have been proud of ushering them into the world under their patronage."

It is hoped we have now sufficiently proved our first position, by shewing the great benefits that would be derived to the community at large, and to such numbers of individuals, by such an institution. It only remains now to point out the means by which it may be carried into effect.

It is proposed, in the first place, that an Academy for the regular study of the English Language, and the Art of Elocution, should be opened, under the protection of a Society established for that purpose; who, by voluntary contributions, shall nurse it in its infant state, till it arrive at such a degree of maturity as to be able to support itself: the whole to be entirely under their regulation, and subject to their control. To these studies may be added that of the modern Languages; together with the bodily exercises of Fencing, Dancing, Riding, &c. in short, all the accomplishments necessary to complete the character of a Gentleman. Those who are most prejudiced in favour of the present mode of Education, must allow, that when the college-course is over, the Education is here at an end; and that there is not, in this kingdom, any Seminary to give a finishing to it. In consequence of which, parents are driven to the sad alternative, either of sending their sons to travel; or of entering them immediately into life at home. A choice of evils! If they go abroad, they leave their country at the most improper season

season of life; rude, over-grown school-boys; without any useful knowledge, without language, without any one personal accomplishment, by which the noblesse of the countries they are to visit are distinguished from the commonalty. Conscious of their imperfections, they avoid all society, except that of their countrymen. They every where herd together; talk nothing but English, so never get enough of the modern Languages to converse with the natives at their ease, and therefore avoid their society. Thus encouraging each other, they plunge into all manner of debaucheries, unrestrained by their bear-leaders, whom they despise, as being the general subject of ridicule of all those with whom they converse. In this way they make what is called the Grand Tour; picking up all the vices, follies, and fopperies in their way; whence, to the disgrace of their country, they every where obtain the contemptuous appellation of *les bêtes Angloises*. They return, without religion, without morals, without the improvement of any one mental faculty; on the contrary, degraded by the practice of every vice that can debase the understanding, or corrupt the heart. Their first object is, to become members of some of the vile gaming clubs, to the ruin of their fortunes and constitutions. Such as are not of the Upper House, apply the broken remnants of their fortune to the purchase of a seat in Parliament, in order to sell their votes for a subsistence, and thus become slaves for life. Is not

this a glorious method of training young men up for the important office of Legislators? This custom began so early as the reign of Henry the Eighth; and, though it has always been reprobated by every writer on that subject, has continued with encreasing force ever since. Roger Ascham, who writ early in the days of Elizabeth, speaks of it as the most fruitful source of the corruption of the youth in his time; as may be seen in the following passages, taken from his Scholemaster: "I know divers that went out of England, men of innocent life, men of excellent learning, who returned out of Italy, not only with worse manners, but also with less learning; neither so willing to live orderly, nor yet so able to speak learnedly, as they were at home before they went abroad.—— But I am afraid that over many of our travellers into Italy, do not eschew the way to Circe's court, but go, and ride, and run, and fly thither; they make great suit to serve her; yea, I could point out some with my finger, that never had gone out of England, but only to serve Circe in Italy. And so being mules and horses before they went, return very swine and asses home again: yet every where very foxes with subtle and busy heads; and, where they may, very wolves, with cruel malicious hearts. A marvellous monster, which, for filthiness of living, for dullness to learning, for wiliness in dealing with others, for malice in hurting without cause; should carry at once

in one body, the belly of a swine, the head of an ass, the brain of a fox, the womb of a wolf. If you think we judge amiss, and write too fore against you, hear what the Italian saith of the Englishman, what the master reporteth of the scholar, who uttereth plainly what is taught by him, and what is learned by you; saying, *Inglese Italianato, e diavolo incarnato*: that is to say, An Englishman Italianized is a devil incarnate. This is not the opinion of one, for some private spite, but the judgment of all in a common proverb, which riseth of that learning, and those manners, which you gather in Italy. A good schol-house of wholesome doctrine, and worthy masters of commendable scholars; where the master had rather disface himself for his teaching, than not shame his scholar for his learning. And now chuse you, you Italian Englishmen, whether you will be angry with us, for calling you monsters; or with the Italians, for calling you devils; or else, with your ownelves, that take so much pains, and go so far, to make yourselves both."

Milton, in his Treatise on Education, has spoken to the same effect; and the judicious Locke, in treating of this subject, has placed it in the strongest light: where he says: "To put them out of their parents view, at a great distance, under a governour, when they think themselves to be too much men to be governed
by

by others, and yet have not experience and prudence enough to govern themselves, what is it but to expose them to all the greatest dangers of their whole lives, when they have the least fence or guard against them? Till that boiling boisterous part of life comes in, it may be hoped the tutor may have some authority: neither the stubbornness of age, nor the temptation and authority of others, can take him from his tutor's conduct till fifteen or sixteen; but then, when he begins to consort himself with men, and thinks himself one; when he comes to relish, and pride himself in manly vices, and thinks it a shame to be any longer under the conduct and controul of another; what can be hoped even from the most careful and discreet governour, when neither he has power to compel, nor his pupil a disposition to be persuaded? But, on the contrary, has the advice of warm blood, and prevailing fashion, to hearken to the temptations of his companions, just as wise as himself, rather than the persuasions of his tutor, who is now looked on as an enemy to his freedom. And when is man so likely to miscarry, as when, at the same time, he is both raw and unruly? This is the season of all his life that most requires the eye and authority of his parents and friends to govern it. The flexibility of the former part of a man's age, not yet grown up to be headstrong, makes it more governable and safe; and in the after part,

reason

reason and foresight begin a little to take place, and mind a man of his safety and improvement."

But in vain has the oracular wisdom of our ablest writers warned men of their danger. In spite of warning, in spite of experience, the strong current of fashion has carried down, regularly, the successive generations of our noblest youth into those perilous seas, where few, very few, escape shipwreck.

A late nobleman, not remarkable for the strictness of his morals, was so convinced of the infallible ruin which attended this course, that he made it a condition in his will, that his heir should never visit Italy, upon pain of forfeiting the whole of his estate which he bequeathed him.

Having thus displayed the fatal consequences of travel, let us now examine the effects produced by the other course, that of entering young men immediately into life at home. We are here speaking of private gentlemen born to independent fortunes, and not intended for any profession. These either resort to the metropolis, or settle in the country. Those who enter into the town-life, soon find, that all they have hitherto been learning cannot be of the smallest use to them; on the contrary, that the least shew of it in company, would only expose them to ridicule.

dicule. Locke, in speaking of the Education of a gentleman, has the following strong passage: " Since it cannot be hoped he should have time and strength to learn all things, most pains should be taken about that which is most necessary; and that principally looked after, which will be of most and frequentest use in the world. But it is no wonder if those who make the fashion, suit it to what they have, and not what their pupils want. The fashion being once established, who can think it strange, that in this, as well as in all other things, it should prevail? and that the greatest part of these, who find their account in an easy submission to it, should be ready to cry out, Heresy, when any one departs from it. 'Tis nevertheless matter of astonishment, that men of quality and parts should suffer themselves to be so far misled by custom and implicit faith. Reason, if consulted with, would advise, that their children's time should be spent in acquiring what might be useful to them when they come to be men, rather than have their heads stuffed with a deal of trash, a great part of which they usually never do ('tis certain they never need to) think on again as long as they live; and so much of it as does stick to them, they are only the worse for. This is so well known, that I appeal to parents themselves, who have been at cost to have their young heirs taught it, whether it be not ridi-

culous for their sons to have any tincture of that sort of learning when they come abroad into the world ; whether any appearance of it would not lessen and disgrace them in company ? And that certainly must be an admirable acquisition, and deserves well to make a part in Education, which men are ashamed of, where they are most concerned to shew their parts and breeding."

In consequence of this, the baffled youth throw aside their studies, and in a few years, all traces of their former acquirements, obtained at such an expence of labour, time, and money, are wholly effaced from their memories. They are told they are to get a knowledge of the world, not of books ; and what a foul volume is here laid before them ! They enter upon this study mere novices, and on the verge of manhood are to begin the alphabet of life, without any guide to direct them but the example of others. The only rule by which they square their conduct is, to do as others do. And whither that will lead them, the general depravity of the age will too plainly point out. Is it any wonder, that at a time of life when the passions are strongest, and subject to no control, they should give a loose to pleasure, and plunge into all manner of excesses ? or, when fatiated with those, they should waste their time in attending all places of public amusement, and thus become either noxious, or, at best, useless members of society ?

They

They who retire to the country finding, like the former, that all the learning they had got, is still of less avail there, like them, throw aside books; and, following the example of their neighbours, commence fox-hunters, horse-racers, cock-fighters, &c. and fill up the vacant hours from these amusements, either with gaming or the bottle.

There are few men of understanding who are not conscious of the fatal consequences attending each of these courses; but parents, in their own defence, say, What can we do? we have but one method of education open to us—we follow that up as far as it goes; and however we may wish that it were extended farther, yet our wishes are vain, as here it stops; and we are driven to the sad alternative of two choices, one of which, with whatever reluctance, we must of necessity adopt. It must be owned, that this reasoning, in the present state of things, is unanswerable; but that it may hereafter be of no validity, is the object of the proposed Plan for opening an Academy, to take up the Education where it is now left unfinished. Were that once well established, we might say with Milton: “We should not then need the *Monseigneurs* of Paris to take our youth into their slight and prodigal custodies, and send them back again transformed into mimicks, apes, and *kek-chose*. But if they desire to see other countries, at two or three and twenty years of

H

age,

age, not to learn principles, but to enlarge experience, and make wise observation, they will, by that time, be such as shall deserve the regard and honour of all men where they pass; and the society and friendship of all those, in all places, who are best and most eminent. And perhaps then other nations will be glad to visit us for their breeding, or else to imitate us in their own country. Or such as chose to enter into life immediately at home, might then engage in their several professions and offices, properly prepared and qualified to make a figure in them; to their own great ease and satisfaction, as well as improvement of their fortunes. Or whether they be to speak in Parliament or Council, honour and attention would be waiting on their lips. There would then also appear in pulpits other visages, other gestures, and stuff otherwise wrought, than what we now sit under, oft-times to as great a trial of our patience, as any other that they preach to us."

I believe there is no one of any consideration, who shall have weighed what has been laid before him on this subject, who will not heartily join in saying: "*It is a consummation devoutly to be wished.*" It remains now only to expatiate on the means for carrying it into effect: which we shall do in the words of the original Proposer of the Plan. Where, after having supported his positions, by various quotations
from

from Milton, Locke, Berkley, &c. he continues thus: " After such authorities as I have quoted, and many others which I might have adduced, had there been occasion for it, I think I run no hazard in affirming, that our Course of Education is, to the last degree, erroneous; and that a reformation there is essentially necessary to the future welfare of these realms. But this is an arduous task, which will require the vigorous support of numbers to ensure it success, and not to be attempted by any single hand. Though public spirit has long been laughed out of all bodies of men, it is to be hoped there are many individuals who have not yet lost all sense of it; who repine at the calamitous state to which our affairs are brought, but, considering the inefficacy of their single efforts, sit down in a state of silent despondence. But if, by any means, men of this description could be brought together to a considerable amount, the sight of their numbers might revive their courage, and give them hopes of success, from the exertion of their united strength. Such a Body might do much good from their own endeavours; but they might reasonably expect also, upon proper application, to have the assistance of the Legislature to perfect their design; as they can approach them with a case directly in point, by a precedent given by a former Parliament, at a time when the necessity of a reformation was far from being so

urgent as it is at this day. As this was a remarkable transaction, though but little known, I shall lay it before the reader, as it is recorded in the Parliamentary History.

“ The same day the Lord Admiral Buckingham made a motion to the House, “ That since the education of youth, especially of quality and worth, is a matter of great consequence; therefore to provide that such persons, in their tender years, do not spend their time fruitlessly about the town, or elsewhere, his Lordship wished that some good and fit course might be taken, for the erection and maintenance of an Academy, for the breeding and bringing up of the nobility and gentry of this kingdom, in their younger and more tender age; and for a free and voluntary contribution from persons of honour and quality for that purpose.”

This motion was generally liked and commended; and many grave and judicious speeches were used by several Lords, touching the most considerable and material points, and the perfect accomplishment of this most honourable project. Some, concerning the place where such an Academy should be erected: others, what qualifications, arts, sciences, and exercises, should there be taught and practised; then how to be maintained, and to what kind of young gentlemen freedom shall be given,

given, to resort or live as they shall please; with other circumstances.

And in order that the matters and points aforesaid, might with more conveniency be opened and discussed, the house was adjourned during pleasure."

The consequence of their meeting after this adjournment, is afterwards thus related :

" Then the House appointed a committee to consider of the Academy afore-mentioned ; consisting of the Prince, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, the Archbishop of York, the Lord Treasurer, the Lord Admiral, the Earl of Oxford, and many others. The Chief-Justice and the Attorney-General to attend them. To meet in the Council-chamber in Whitehall."

Here we may see of what vast importance this Proposal was then considered to be, when such a committee, with the Prince of Wales at their head, was appointed to carry it into execution, with the unanimous approbation of both Houses.

That this noble undertaking did not succeed, was owing, in the first place, to some heats that broke out at that time in the House of Commons, which ended in the dissolution of that parliament ; and in the next, to the death of the Duke of Buckingham, its author and promoter, which followed soon after.

Unfortunately

Unfortunately for their posterity, indeed, this glorious design of our ancestors did not take place. Had it succeeded, it is more than probable Great Britain would not be in the deplorable condition to which she is now reduced. Let not therefore future generations have the same cause to complain of our neglect, and lay their ruin at our door. Is it not amazing that from that hour to this, the state of Education should never have come even into the contemplation of our senate? In the present critical state of things, they may justly plead the necessity of giving up their whole attention to objects of more immediate pressure; and this may serve as an excuse for a long time to come. But if, in the mean time, a society were formed to smoothe the way, and prepare the plan; if one small Academy only were established on that plan, and the good fruits of such an institution seen; there can be no doubt but that it would meet the sanction and support of the legislature on a more enlarged scale, upon application from so respectable a body. If there be any virtue left in this country, it will not be long ere such a society will be formed: or, if all public spirit be indeed extinct, it is to be hoped that the natural affection of parents will make them unite, to assist in opening a new channel for their dear young ones, where they may safely sail down the stream of life; and not desperately set them afloat on the old one, from whose hidden rocks, quicksands, and whirlpools, few escape."

Enough has been said to induce all men of worth to lend a helping hand to this great work. But as the bulk of mankind are of such fordid selfish dispositions as to look with unconcern upon all proposals for the public good, wherein they do not find their own interests immediately concerned; it may not be amiss to operate upon their fears, since they are not to be swayed by more generous motives, by placing before their eyes the inevitable ruin which must follow to this country, if things are permitted much longer to take the same course. It requires no great sagacity, or deep knowledge of history, to foresee that unless a reformation takes place in the manners of the people, this country is undone. The only possible means by which that can be accomplished, have been clearly pointed out by Mr. Sheridan, in the following way :

“ No one who has at all considered the subject, if asked what chiefly forms men to good or evil, but will readily answer — *Education*. One would imagine, therefore, when a state becomes highly disordered, when the manners and principles of a nation are universally corrupt, that the first step towards a reformation, would be, to examine the state of Education in that country, as being the source of manners and principles; the fountain from which flow all that constitute the dignity, or debasement of human nature, and the principal cause of the characteristic difference between nations, as well

well as individuals. Upon a close examination it would appear, that in no civilized country in the world, was there ever so preposterous a course of Education, as that at present established in England.

Such seed as you sow, such shall ye reap: and it would be as vain to expect forests of oak from haws, or crops of wheat from chaff, as that able statesmen, wise and uncorrupt senators, or virtuous citizens, should be produced from those seminaries in which our youth are trained. It is allowed on all hands, that, for a long time past, each succeeding generation has improved on the former in all manner of vice, till the measure of iniquity is almost full; and this must continue to be the case, while that mode of Education remains unaltered, till it ends in the final ruin of this once happy country. Many fatal symptoms of its near approach have of late appeared. The rapid decline of this once great empire, in so short a space of time as is not to be paralleled in the history of the world; the tide of luxury which has deluged the land, with all its attendants, universal profligacy of manners, factions, convulsions throughout the realm; all the prognostics which have ever preceded the ruin of free states, have come heavy and thick upon us. Alarmed by the near prospect of so fatal an event, numbers of well-meaning men, have echoed the word *Reformation — Reformation —*
through

through the land. And in what is this proposed reformation to consist? Why, in making some changes in the laws relative to one branch of the constitution. And are we still so blind as to look for our constitution in the dead letter, the paper model, when we ought to know that it is a living one, built up of men; and according as they are adapted, or otherwise, to their several stations, the edifice must either remain firm, or moulder away, and at length tumble down? Shall we still trust to parchment bonds, which, experience has shewn, are as easily snapped asunder by the giant Corruption, as the threads with which his hands were bound, were by Samson? No reformation can be of any avail, but that of men; and this, with regard to such as are advanced in life, who have taken their bent, and whose habits are grown inveterate by time, has ever been found an impracticable task. What gardener is so absurd as to try to force full grown trees into regular espaliers, while the pliant young ones obey his forming hand, and take what bent he pleases?

Let us therefore turn our thoughts to the rising generation, where alone reformation can begin with any prospect of success. Let us endeavour to establish such a mode of Education, as is described by Milton, where he says, —“ I shall detain you no longer in the demonstration of what we should not do, but strait

I

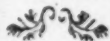
conduct

conduct you to a hill-side, where I will point you out the right path of a virtuous and noble Education: laborious indeed at the first ascent, but else so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospects, and melodious sounds, on every side, that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming. I doubt not but ye shall have more ado to drive our dullest and laziest youth, our stocks and stubs, from the infinite desire of such a happy nurture, than we have now, to hale and drag our choicest and hopefulest wits, to that asinine feast of sow-thistles and brambles, which is commonly set before them, as all the food and entertainment for their tenderest and most docible age. I call therefore a complete and generous Education, that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously, all the offices, both private and public, of peace and of war."

From such an institution we might reasonably hope to see the rising and future generations, in an opposite direction to those who have preceded them, emulously contending who shall excel most in every quality that can adorn private life, or render them useful members of the community. In them we might expect to find wise and able statesmen, steady and incorruptible patriots, firm supporters of our noble constitution both in church and state, and an impenetrable bulwark against the foes of their country; and this would be the sure way, as the great Bishop of Cloyne
 7 has,

has, it is hoped, prophetically said,—"Not only to prevent our final ruin, but also to render us a more happy and flourishing people than ever."

Upon the whole, there probably never was a society formed with such extensive views, or to answer such noble purposes. There are already many respectable names set down of persons, whose approbation does credit to the Plan, and who mean to use their utmost exertions in support of it. But as the speed of its execution, and the extent of the benefits to be derived from it, will, in a great measure, depend upon the number, as well as character of those who first engage in it, we thought it necessary to make known our sentiments in this manner, in hopes that all men of worth, who shall think as we do of the design, will also join us in our endeavours to promote it. As soon as a sufficient number of names shall be set down, notice will be given in the Public Papers of a day fixed for a general meeting of this new Society, where a scheme of the properest methods to be taken for the establishment of this new Institution will be laid before them. All therefore who are desirous of becoming Members of this most honourable Association, are requested to send in their names, and places of abode, to Mr. Sheridan, at No. 7, Great Marlborough Street.



1 19 1

It is hoped, probably, that the
only way to save our last twin, and to
save a more happy and flourishing people than
ever.

When the whole of the present paper was a
little more than a year ago, it was a
very different matter. Then, and there,
many respectable names for down of persons,
whose approbation those credit to the Plan, and
who mean to the their utmost efforts in the
cause of it. But as the period of the execution
and the extent of the benefits to be derived from
it, well, in a great measure, upon the
character of the work who had
known in the past, it was to make
known our work, of a still larger world
of the future, will also join in the great
movement. It is now as a religious movement
of great force, and it is now, with the
strength of the future, a day that is a great
movement of the new world, with a feeling of
a great movement to be taken for the
future of the new movement will be the
future. All therefore who are engaged in
the movement of the new movement, and
who are intended to find in their names,
and places of abode, to the future, as they



Great Manuscript

